

Tanya E. Moore, SBN 206683
MOORE LAW FIRM, P.C.
300 South First Street Ste. 342
San Jose, California 95113
Telephone (408) 298-2000
Facsimile (408) 298-6046
E-mail: service@moorelawfirm.com
tanya@moorelawfirm.com

Attorney for Plaintiff
Gerardo Hernandez

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

GERARDO HERNANDEZ,) No.
)
Plaintiff,) COMPLAINT ASSERTING DENIAL OF
) RIGHT OF ACCESS UNDER THE
vs.) AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
) FOR INJUNCTIVE RELIEF,
HK SANDHU INC; OMAR S. MUSHTAQ;) DECLARATORY RELIEF, DAMAGES,
KHALILULLAH NOORULHUDA;) ATTORNEYS' FEES AND COSTS (ADA
NORTHWEST DEALERCO HOLDINGS,)
LLC; BERTO DEVELOPMENT, A)
CALIFORNIA LIMITED PARTNERSHIP;)
)
Defendants.)
)
)

I. SUMMARY

1. This is a civil rights action by plaintiff GERARDO HERNANDEZ ("Plaintiff") for discrimination at the building, structure, facility, complex, property, land, development, and/or surrounding business complex known as:

Fuel Stop
12015 Saratoga-Sunnyvale Road
Saratoga, California 95070
(hereafter "the Facility")

2. Plaintiff seeks damages, injunctive and declaratory relief, attorney fees and costs, against HK SANDHU INC; OMAR S. MUSHTAQ; KHALILULLAH

1 NOORULHUDA; NORTHWEST DEALERCO HOLDINGS, LLC; and BERTO
2 DEVELOPMENT, A CALIFORNIA LIMITED PARTNERSHIP (hereinafter collectively
3 referred to as “Defendants”), pursuant to Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of
4 1990 (42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 et seq.) (“ADA”) and related California statutes.

5 **II. JURISDICTION**

6 3. This Court has original jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1343 for ADA
7 claims.

8 4. Supplemental jurisdiction for claims brought under parallel California law –
9 arising from the same nucleus of operative facts – is predicated on 28 U.S.C. § 1367.

10 5. Plaintiff’s claims are authorized by 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201 and 2202.

11 **III. VENUE**

12 6. All actions complained of herein take place within the jurisdiction of the United
13 States District Court, Northern District of California, and venue is invoked pursuant to 28
14 U.S.C. § 1391(b), (c).

15 **IV. PARTIES**

16 7. Defendants own, operate, and/or lease the Facility, and each consists of a person
17 (or persons), firm, and/or corporation.

18 8. Plaintiff is substantially limited in his ability to walk, and must use a wheelchair
19 for mobility. Consequently, Plaintiff is “physically disabled,” as defined by all applicable
20 California and United States laws, and a member of the public whose rights are protected by
21 these laws.

22 **V. FACTS**

23 9. The Facility is a gas station open to the public, intended for non-residential use,
24 and its operation affects commerce. The Facility is therefore a public accommodation as
25 defined by applicable state and federal laws.

26 10. Plaintiff lives less than twenty miles from the Facility and visited the Facility on
27 or about October 29, 2022 to purchase gasoline for his vehicle. During his visit to the Facility,
28 Plaintiff personally encountered barriers (both physical and intangible) that interfered with, if

1 not outright denied, Plaintiff's ability to use and enjoy the goods, services, privileges and
2 accommodations offered at the Facility. These barriers include, but are not necessarily limited
3 to, the following:

- 4 a) No accessible fuel pump is provided.
 - 5 a. The operable parts of the fuel pumps, including the key pad and
 - 6 upper screen buttons, are too high to be easily reachable from a
 - 7 wheelchair.
 - 8 b. As a result, Plaintiff decided it would be too difficult to attempt
 - 9 to pay for gas at the fuel pump.
- 10 b) Defendants fail to provide a way for disabled customers to pay for fuel
- 11 or purchase items from the sales and service counter.
 - 12 a. The sales and service counter, located at the attendant kiosk, is
 - 13 too high and the touchscreen payment device requires reaching
 - 14 over the high counter.
 - 15 b. Additionally, the required clear ground space adjacent to the
 - 16 counter is obstructed by a column and curb.
 - 17 c. Finally, the route of travel from the fuel pumps to the counter is
 - 18 cracked and uneven.
 - 19 d. Defendants do not provide alternative accommodations, such as
 - 20 assisting wheelchair users with payment outside the kiosk, in lieu
 - 21 of an accessible counter.
 - 22 e. Plaintiff needed to pay for his gas in person at the counter
 - 23 because he could not easily reach the fuel pump buttons, and
 - 24 because he is wary of credit card skimming devices on the fuel
 - 25 pumps. It was difficult for Plaintiff to approach the counter due
 - 26 to the obstructions and uneven surfaces, and it was hard for him
 - 27 to reach the touchscreen on the payment device.
- 28 c) There is no accessible route from the public sidewalk to the Facility.

1 Plaintiff often wheels to neighboring businesses, especially to purchase
2 food, when fueling his vehicle and is aware that he would have difficulty
3 doing so at the Facility because the route from the public sidewalk to the
4 fuel pumps and counter is cracked and uneven.

5 11. There may exist other barriers at the Facility which relate to Plaintiff's
6 disabilities, and he will seek to amend this Complaint once such additional barriers are
7 identified as it is Plaintiff's intention to have all barriers which exist at the Facility and relate to
8 his disabilities removed to afford him full and equal access.

9 12. Plaintiff was, and continues to be, deterred from visiting the Facility because
10 Plaintiff knows that the Facility's goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, and
11 accommodations were and are unavailable to Plaintiff due to Plaintiff's physical disabilities.
12 Plaintiff enjoys the goods and services offered at the Facility, and will return to the Facility
13 once the barriers are removed.

14 13. Defendants knew, or should have known, that these elements and areas of the
15 Facility were inaccessible, violate state and federal law, and interfere with (or deny) access to
16 the physically disabled. Moreover, Defendants have the financial resources to remove these
17 barriers from the Facility (without much difficulty or expense), and make the Facility
18 accessible to the physically disabled. To date, however, Defendants refuse to either remove
19 those barriers or seek an unreasonable hardship exemption to excuse non-compliance.

20 14. At all relevant times, Defendants have possessed and enjoyed sufficient control
21 and authority to modify the Facility to remove impediments to wheelchair access and to
22 comply with the 1991 ADA Accessibility Guidelines and/or the 2010 ADA Standards for
23 Accessible Design. Defendants have not removed such impediments and have not modified the
24 Facility to conform to accessibility standards. Defendants have intentionally maintained the
25 Facility in its current condition and have intentionally refrained from altering the Facility so
26 that it complies with the accessibility standards.

27 //

28 //

15. Plaintiff further alleges that the (continued) presence of barriers at the Facility is so obvious as to establish Defendants’ discriminatory intent. On information and belief, Plaintiff avers that evidence of this discriminatory intent includes Defendants’ refusal to adhere to relevant building standards; disregard for the building plans and permits issued for the Facility; conscientious decision to maintain the architectural layout (as it currently exists) at the Facility; decision not to remove barriers from the Facility; and allowance that Defendants’ property continues to exist in its non-compliant state. Plaintiff further alleges, on information and belief, that the Facility is not in the midst of a remodel, and that the barriers present at the Facility are not isolated or temporary interruptions in access due to maintenance or repairs.

VI. FIRST CLAIM

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Denial of “Full and Equal” Enjoyment and Use

16. Plaintiff re-pleads and incorporates by reference the allegations contained in each of the foregoing paragraphs, and incorporates them herein as if separately re-pled.

17. Title III of the ADA holds as a “general rule” that no individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment (or use) of goods, services, facilities, privileges, and accommodations offered by any person who owns, operates, or leases a place of public accommodation. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(a).

18. Defendants discriminated against Plaintiff by denying Plaintiff “full and equal enjoyment” and use of the goods, services, facilities, privileges and accommodations of the Facility during each visit and each incident of deterrence.

Failure to Remove Architectural Barriers in an Existing Facility

19. The ADA specifically prohibits failing to remove architectural barriers, which are structural in nature, in existing facilities where such removal is readily achievable. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv).

//

//

//

20. When an entity can demonstrate that removal of a barrier is not readily achievable, a failure to make goods, services, facilities, or accommodations available through alternative methods is also specifically prohibited if these methods are readily achievable. *Id.* § 12182(b)(2)(A)(v).

21. Here, Plaintiff alleges that Defendants can easily remove the architectural barriers at the Facility without much difficulty or expense, that the cost of removing the architectural barriers does not exceed the benefits under the particular circumstances, and that Defendants violated the ADA by failing to remove those barriers, when it was readily achievable to do so.

22. In the alternative, if it was not “readily achievable” for Defendants to remove the Facility’s barriers, then Defendants violated the ADA by failing to make the required services available through alternative methods, which are readily achievable.

Failure to Design and Construct an Accessible Facility

23. Plaintiff alleges on information and belief that the Facility was designed and constructed (or both) after January 26, 1993 – independently triggering access requirements under Title III of the ADA.

24. The ADA also prohibits designing and constructing facilities for first occupancy after January 26, 1993, that aren’t readily accessible to, and usable by, individuals with disabilities when it was structurally practicable to do so. 42 U.S.C. § 12183(a)(1).

25. Here, Defendants violated the ADA by designing and constructing (or both) the Facility in a manner that was not readily accessible to the physically disabled public – including Plaintiff – when it was structurally practical to do so.¹

Failure to Make an Altered Facility Accessible

26. Plaintiff alleges on information and belief that the Facility was modified after January 26, 1993, independently triggering access requirements under the ADA.

//

¹ Nothing within this Complaint should be construed as an allegation that Plaintiff is bringing this action as a private attorney general under either state or federal statutes.

1 27. The ADA also requires that facilities altered in a manner that affects (or could
2 affect) its usability must be made readily accessible to individuals with disabilities to the
3 maximum extent feasible. 42 U.S.C. § 12183(a)(2). Altering an area that contains a facility's
4 primary function also requires making the paths of travel, bathrooms, telephones, and drinking
5 fountains serving that area accessible to the maximum extent feasible. Id.

6 28. Here, Defendants altered the Facility in a manner that violated the ADA and
7 was not readily accessible to the physically disabled public – including Plaintiff – to the
8 maximum extent feasible.

9 Failure to Modify Existing Policies and Procedures

10 29. The ADA also requires reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or
11 procedures, when necessary to afford such goods, services, facilities, or accommodations to
12 individuals with disabilities, unless the entity can demonstrate that making such modifications
13 would fundamentally alter their nature. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(ii).

14 30. Here, Defendants violated the ADA by failing to make reasonable modifications
15 in policies, practices, or procedures at the Facility, when these modifications were necessary to
16 afford (and would not fundamentally alter the nature of) these goods, services, facilities, or
17 accommodations.

18 Failure to Maintain Accessible Features

19 31. Defendants additionally violated the ADA by failing to maintain in operable
20 working condition those features of the Facility that are required to be readily accessible to and
21 usable by persons with disabilities.

22 32. Such failure by Defendants to maintain the Facility in an accessible condition
23 was not an isolated or temporary interruption in service or access due to maintenance or
24 repairs.

25 33. Plaintiff seeks all relief available under the ADA (i.e., injunctive relief, attorney
26 fees, costs, legal expense) for these aforementioned violations. 42 U.S.C. § 12205.

27 34. Plaintiff seeks a finding from this Court (i.e., declaratory relief) that Defendants
28 violated the ADA in order to pursue damages under California's Unruh Civil Rights Act.

VII. SECOND CLAIM

Unruh Act

35. Plaintiff re-pleads and incorporates by reference the allegations contained in each of the foregoing paragraphs, and incorporates them herein as if separately re-pled.

36. California Civil Code § 51 states, in part, that: All persons within the jurisdiction of this state are entitled to the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, privileges, or services in all business establishments of every kind whatsoever.

37. California Civil Code § 51.5 also states, in part that: No business establishment of any kind whatsoever shall discriminate against any person in this state because of the disability of the person.

38. California Civil Code § 51(f) specifically incorporates (by reference) an individual's rights under the ADA into the Unruh Act.

39. Defendants' aforementioned acts and omissions denied the physically disabled public – including Plaintiff – full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, privileges and services in a business establishment (because of their physical disability).

40. These acts and omissions (including the ones that violate the ADA) denied, aided or incited a denial, or discriminated against Plaintiff by violating the Unruh Act.

41. Plaintiff was damaged by Defendants' wrongful conduct, and seeks statutory minimum damages of \$4,000 for each offense.

42. Plaintiff also seeks to enjoin Defendants from violating the Unruh Act (and ADA), and recover reasonable attorneys' fees and costs incurred under California Civil Code § 52(a).

VIII. THIRD CLAIM

Denial of Full and Equal Access to Public Facilities

43. Plaintiff re-pleads and incorporates by reference the allegations contained in each of the foregoing paragraphs, and incorporates them herein as if separately re-pled.

44. Health and Safety Code § 19955(a) states, in part, that: California public accommodations or facilities (built with private funds) shall adhere to the provisions of

Government Code § 4450.

45. Health and Safety Code § 19959 states, in part, that: Every existing (non-exempt) public accommodation constructed prior to July 1, 1970, which is altered or structurally repaired, is required to comply with this chapter.

46. Plaintiff alleges the Facility is a public accommodation constructed, altered, or repaired in a manner that violates Part 5.5 of the Health and Safety Code or Government Code § 4450 (or both), and that the Facility was not exempt under Health and Safety Code § 19956.

47. Defendants' non-compliance with these requirements at the Facility aggrieved (or potentially aggrieved) Plaintiff and other persons with physical disabilities. Accordingly, Plaintiff seeks injunctive relief and attorney fees pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 19953.

IX. PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays judgment against Defendants, and each of them, for:

1. Injunctive relief, preventive relief, or any other relief the Court deems proper.
2. Statutory minimum damages under section 52(a) of the California Civil Code according to proof.
3. Declaratory relief finding that Defendants violated the ADA for the purposes of Unruh Act damages.
4. Attorneys' fees, litigation expenses, and costs of suit.²
5. Interest at the legal rate from the date of the filing of this action.
6. For such other and further relief as the Court deems proper.

Dated: 4/18/2023

MOORE LAW FIRM, P.C.

/s/ Tanya E. Moore

Tanya E. Moore

Attorney for Plaintiff

Gerardo Hernandez

² This includes attorneys' fees under California Code of Civil Procedure § 1021.5.

VERIFICATION

I, GERARDO HERNANDEZ, am the plaintiff in the above-entitled action. I have read the foregoing Complaint and know the contents thereof. The same is true of my own knowledge, except as to those matters which are therein alleged on information and belief, and as to those matters, I believe them to be true.

I verify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Dated: 4/18/2023

/s/ Gerardo Hernandez
Gerardo Hernandez

I attest that the original signature of the person whose electronic signature is shown above is maintained by me, and that his concurrence in the filing of this document and attribution of his signature was obtained.

/s/ Tanya E. Moore
Tanya E. Moore
Attorney for Plaintiff,
GERARDO HERNANDEZ